

Mayor's Message

May 2009

In our City Update last month, I discussed our involvement with the Utah Telecommunication Open Infrastructure Agency known as UTOPIA. I would like to follow up in this message with more information on this service. As most of you are aware, our City is a 'full service' City. That means we provide most of the services most residents receive. Thanks to past planning, sometimes dating back many years, we have our own water system, sewer system, library, parks and recreation programs, Heritage Senior Center, Police Department, Fire Department, ambulance service and Power Department. Adding a fiber optic system to these services has been important to me and the Council because we believe this technology is vital to our progressive residents and businesses.

To date, the City has made minimal investments in UTOPIA infrastructure while about 60% of the homes and businesses in Murray have access to the service. The job of UTOPIA is to place the fiber, then any providers who choose to offer their services through it, can have access to it. This provides competition and allows you to decide which service plan meets your needs. We like to say UTOPIA is like an airport - we build and operate it, but the providers are like the many different airlines that fly in and out.

In a recent article on the U. S. Federal Communications Commission (FCC), government officials and advocacy groups suggested that it is time for a national broadband policy. They believe it is critical to the economic future of our Country. Michael Copps, the FCC's acting chairman stated, "Broadband can be the great enabler that restores America's economic well-being and opens doors of opportunity for all Americans to pass through . . . It is technology that intersects with just about every great challenge confronting our nation - whether it is jobs, education, energy, climate change and the environment, international competitiveness, health care, overcoming disabilities, equal opportunity - the list goes on." I am convinced that the UTOPIA model is going to be key to our Country continuing to progress by employing fiber to the home.

In the future we may be asked to help pay for this infrastructure. The model is based on those who use it helping to cover these costs. While UTOPIA is still young and going through some growing pains, I believe we have great new opportunities by having fiber in our City. This year we are planning to update the remaining water meters on the City system so they can be read electronically. Fiber helps make this possible. Opportunities for security improvements can be realized by the use of this system, sometimes combined with wireless technology. Data collection can become instantaneous, making better use of City resources. These services will benefit all residents of our City. If you would like more information about this service, you can go to www.utopianet.org or call 801-613-3800.